

Antrim County Transportation

P.O. Box 120
4700 South M-88
Bellaire, Michigan 49615

Phone: 231-533-8644
Fax: 231-533-8504
act@torchlake.com

Joint House/Senate Transportation Public Hearing on MDOT's Five Year Plan April 14, 2005 in Cadillac, Michigan

My name is Sheridan Rhoads and I am currently the Director of Transportation for Antrim County. I want to thank the panel for providing the opportunity for local input on the Transportation Plan.

Prior to this position I spent several years in Lansing working for the Office of Highway Safety Planning and had the privilege of working on several pieces of life-saving legislation such as seat belt and child safety seats, graduated licensing, drunk driving statute improvements as well as the creation of the Michigan Truck Safety Commission.

What I have learned in ten short months in this position is how important bus transportation is to the citizens and to the economy of the county. We are a very small operation, but similar to numerous other rural transit systems. The population of Antrim County is a mere 23,000 in winter but swells significantly in the summer.

Antrim County's Transit profile looks like this:

Buses with lifts	14
Drivers	13
Passengers (2004)	49,179
Elderly	6,153
Disabled	9,952
Regular	31,386

Even though these numbers are small, for each of these riders it is their only option.

In reviewing the Five Year Plan, it appears that Rural Transit has been given limited attention in the planning process. Mostly what I see are references to FY 05 funding levels.

The population growth projections for our area over the next 20 years are staggering and the need for public transit will certainly grow as well. I would encourage MDOT to continue to work with providers and users to ensure that public transit continues to grow as a viable partner along with other rural transportation modes.

I encourage the Legislature to continue to seek ways of helping us secure a stable source of funding. I think it is vital that we have a strong funding partnership that includes local, state and federal funds along with appropriate user fees.

In addition, I would like to commend the MDOT staff for doing an outstanding job administering this program. I am very appreciative of their professionalism, dedication and patience as they answer my many questions.

Finally, for me personally, it is a gratifying experience to help provide this important and appreciated service to our citizens that truly need it. If rural transit comes to an end due to financial constraints I will surely get into my car and find other work, or go fishing. However, many of the citizens in Antrim County will not have that option. Anything you can do to help sustain public transit for these 49,000 riders and the 15 employees on our staff will be greatly appreciated.

Let's all plan together to solve these difficult problems for the sake of our seniors, the disabled, and those without cars.

